Translating Wordplay in A Comedy Movie: Strategies and Their Effectiveness Viewed from a Multimodal Perspective

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Abstract*

This descriptive qualitative research on audiovisual translation aims to describe and analyze two elements, namely, the wordplay translation strategies applied by the translator in Scary Movie 3 and the effectiveness of the strategies from a multimodality perspective. Three instruments were used in collecting data; transcription sheet, selection sheet and category matrix. The result revealed that four strategies were implemented in translating wordplay in this movie: wordplay translation into non-wordplay, zero translation, wordplay translation by borrowing the wordplay of the source language, and wordplay translation to wordplay with a related rhetorical device. Furthermore, it was also found that the effectiveness of the strategies was supported by the existence of images (nonverbal visual channel (NVC)), background sounds (nonverbal auditory channel (NAC)), dialogue (verbal auditory channel (VAC)), and the subtitles (verbal-visual channel (VVC)). The holistic analysis of all polysemiotic channels in the scenes show that the characteristics of audiovisual translation does not align the monosemiotic translation. The existence of the semiotic channels allow the text compression in the subtitle without reducing the naration flow.

1. Introduction

This study aims to identify the wordplay translation strategies applied by the translator of *Scary Movie 3* and to analyze each strategy's effectiveness in conveying the message of the source language. Further investigation is necessary since translating wordplay as part of verbal humour is a complex process. It has to maintain the sense of jocosity of the translated movie (Fithri, 2019). Translators face double problems in the process of translation. First, they must carry out a linguistic and cultural transfer so that the messages contained in the source language can be translated clearly, accurately and naturally. Second, they must be able to retain the 'funny message' contained in the source language wordplay.

Jaskanen (1999), based on the definition given by Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1981), stated that pragmatically humour is a text that contains a perlocutionary effect on 'people's laugh'. In other words, humour is anything intended to cause a funny effect, even though it is not always understood or interpreted as intended by the audience or interlocutor. From this definition, it can be stated that a joke considered funny by someone is not necessarily funny by someone else. It is common in the wordplay of humour. Characters in comedy movies often do not show funny movements or expressions but instead make jokes. It makes translating comedy movies even more painstaking because audiences depend entirely on the translation to understand the humour.

Furthermore, the translation of wordplay in movies also encounters the four *subtitling challenges* stated by Hatim and Mason (1997). The first challenge is transitioning from spoken to written (diasemiotic) translation mode. Second, the limited time and place to show the translation on screen. Third, due to time and space constraints, translators are directed to trim the source text volume so that it becomes a concise target language text. Fourth, there is a need to harmonize the image or scene that is shown with the *subtitles* that are made. Then, if we look at the nature of a movie, there are aspects of multimodality that collaborate in constructing the movie's narrative. According to Baker (1998), four *channels* support the multimodality aspect: images, *subtitles*, background music, and character conversations or monologues. Baker's opinion aligns with several linguists' perspectives, namely; Cope & Kalantzis (2000); Kress, 2000a, 2000b; Kress &

van Leeuwen, 1996; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; New London Group, 2000, who states that the term multimodal describes the complexity and interrelation of a variety of meanings that combine linguistic, visual, auditory, gestural, and spatial aspects. Multimodal design differs from the variety of independent meanings because this design emphasizes the interrelation of various varieties that exist in a dynamic unit to form meaning. Therefore, the translator does not only focus on the process of translating a dialogue or monologue but must pay attention to these four aspects as a whole so that the translation becomes effective and efficient.

There were some researchers investigated the process and product of movie translation. Dewi (2009), Díaz-Pérez (2014), and Koochacki (2016) analyzed the strategies of translating wordplay in various movies. The strategies found are varied from one movie to another, so the strategies implemented to translate them are also varied. The researchers seem to have been maximal in dissecting aspects of wordplay, but there is one thing that has not been touched on in the analysis; the multimodality aspect. This kind of analysis suggests that subtitling is a translation of a conversation or a monologue so that the resulting analysis is still monosemiotic, not polysemiotic. Pieper (2021) studied multimodality in the translation of a picture book, concluding that words and images have similar roles in conveying meaning. Pieper's research has an essential role in the modern view of translation and must be extended to other types of translation, one of which is audiovisual translation.

Unlike the reviewed research above, this research has been carried out that emphasizes the strategy identification of translating wordplay into a comedy concerning the essential role of multimodality. Due to data availability, the English comedy movie 'Scary Movie 3 ' was chosen for the research. It is expected that the result of the research may be a constructive source in combining monosemiotic translation of the written text with multimodality for polysemiotic translation.

2. Research Methods

The research was a descriptive qualitative design, with the subject a comedy movie, Scary Movie 3. The number of wordplays available in the characters' dialogues is enormous. This movie is the sequel to 'Scary Movie 1' and 'Scary Movie 2 ' and was officially distributed in Indonesia in various formats (widescreen, VCD, DVD, and online platforms), so it is assumed that the subtitles have been reprocessed several times for improving the translation quality before being released to the Indonesian market.

The object of research is the strategy of translating wordplay and the effectiveness of these strategies. Three research instruments were used: transcription sheet, selection sheet and category matrix. The data collected were analyzed through formal techniques (Sudaryanto, 1986: 145), with the support of tables combined with interpretive descriptive explanations. This study does not only focus on the subtitles as a translation of movie dialogue, but as an integrated part with images, music, and dialogue thoroughly and synchronously (multimodal). In order to analyze the strategies used in translating wordplay, the theory stated by Delabatista (1993: 191-218) was implemented. The strategies are; 1) wordplay to wordplay, 2) wordplay to non-wordplay, 3) wordplay to a wordplay-related rhetorical device, 4) zero translation, 5) direct copy, 6) transference or borrowing, 7) addition: non-wordplay to wordplay, 8) addition: zero to wordplay, and 9) editorial technique. In addition, Baker (1998) uses the theory to analyze the strategy's effectiveness from the perspective of the movie's multimodality.

3. Discussions

The discussion is divided into two sections based on the arrangement of the research questions. The former section is about translation strategy identification, and the latter is about the effectiveness of the strategies related to multimodal elements of the movie.

Wordplay Translation Strategies

In this movie, there are four strategies applied by the translator: first, wordplay translation into non-wordplay; second, zero translation; third, wordplay translation with borrowing; and fourth, wordplay to a wordplay-related rhetorical device.

Wordplay Translation into Non-Wordplay

The translator decision of translating wordplay into non-wordplay strategy attempts to convey the message in English by using the closest equivalent in Indonesian. This strategy does not pay attention to the rhyme of the wordplay used in the source text, so it seems more concerned with delivering literal messages, which certainly results in less natural translation results. The aspect of naturalness in this context is viewed from the message contained in the source language, which highlights the humour caused by the effect of the wordplay spoken by the characters. In more detail, the following data and description are presented.

Table 1
Wordplay into Non-Wordplay translation strategy

Source Text	Target Text
(a1) I know you, you're Tom Logan's brother.	(a2) *Aku tahu kau. Kau adiknya Tom Logan*
(a3) And you're that reporter, Cindy Campbell.	(a4) *Dan kau reporter itu. Cindy Campbell.*
(a5) You did the story	(a6) *Yang mengerjakan cerita **siklus***
on our **cop cycles / Crop cycles**	***Polisi itu.*/ *Lingkaran panen***

Table 1 shows excerpts of conversations between two characters using wordplay (see a5, which is translated into a6). The table also shows other utterances in the conversation to show the context of the dialog (from a1 to a4). In source text a5, the wordplay is categorized as paronymy because 'cop cycles' and 'crop cycles' have almost the same spelling and pronunciation. The paronymy was uttered by one of the movie characters who was pretending to be smart in order to impress the girl talking to him. This kind of wordplay is typical in comedy movies by including a 'correction' of the misspelt word immediately after the mispronunciation is committed. This correction is usually done by another character so that the audience understands what the word was wrongly said and can immediately catch the humour conveyed.

Translators seem to have difficulty finding paronymic equivalent in the source text. Therefore, the strategy applied in the translation is using a common language in the target language. *'Siklus polisi'* is the equivalent of 'cop cycles'*,* and *'lingkaran panen'* is the equivalent of 'crop cycles'. The translation of 'crop cycles' into *'lingkaran panen'* is literal and less accurate because the meaning is not natural in Indoenesian context. There is no term *'lingkaran panen'* found in natural Indonesian language. In the movie, 'crop cycles' refers to a circular sign that appears on farmland and is often associated with the appearance of aliens from outer space. This strategy does not maintain the use of source language wordplay so that the humorous effect it contains is not conveyed in the translation. ' Cop' and ' crop' have almost the same spelling and sound, but not so for *'polisi'* and *'panen'*. This strategy conveys the literal message of the source text without maintaining the rhyme of the wordplay in the source text. The translators choose this strategy because there is no other way to transfer the meaning without using many words for compressing volume of the text.

Zero Translation

In the movie, some utterances of the characters are left untranslated. They also contain wordplay, as presented in table 2.

Table 2
Zero translation strategy.

Source Text	Target Text
(l1) Me and Buffy spend every winter at Vail	-
(l2) How many bitches have I **slapped**?	-

Table 2 contains untranslated homophones in the target text. By not translating this source text, the source text message is lost, which at least affects the flow of the movie's narrative. The translator does this for two reasons. First, quotes l1 and l2 are parts of the lyrics of a rap song that do not play a vital role in conveying the movie's narrative. This rap song was sung at a rap-singing battle which is only a short scene in the movie. Second, the speaking speed of the lyrics is quite high, making it difficult for translators to display them on the screen for a very limited time. Even if it is forced to be broadcast, the audience will not have enough time to read it. The word 'slapped' in l2 is a homophone with 'slept'*,* which is the past participle of *'sleep'*. These two words have a meaningful relationship with the word 'bitches' in l2. The word 'bitches' refers to the

prostitutes who had been invited to sleep by the opposing character in the rap competition, named 'Fat Joe'. In the competition, two rappers mocked each other in a song. The ugliness of the opponent is described in the lyrics of the song.

Wordplay translation with borrowing

In addition to the strategy of using general Indonesian equivalents and strategies without being translated, there is another strategy that is also applied by translators, namely the strategy of translating wordplay using borrowed words from the source language text. Table 3 below contains excerpts from the conversation.

Table 3
Borrowing translation strategies.

Source Text	Target Text
(m1) I'll be **tappin** , I'll be **cappin** , I'll be **tappin** , I'll be **flappin** , I'll be happening.	(m2) *Aku akan **ngerap**, **nge-cap**, **nge-tap**, **Nge-flap**, aku akan jadi peristiwa.*
(m3) **Ding** , **bing, wings** . Yo!/Sounds good!	(m4) ***Ding, bing, wing**./ Kedengarannya bagus.*
(m5) **Wood** , good, should, **hood** .	(m6) *Hutan (**wood**), bagus, mau, **hood***

Compared to the strategies applied previously, borrowing the source text wordplay for the target text has a different emphasis from the previous strategy. The previous strategy showed that the translator did not maintain the existing wordplay but used common equivalents in Indonesian. The conversation quoted in table 3 is the only wordplay translated using borrowing words from the source text. The translator maintains the use of the wordplay from the source text for several reasons. First, the conversation quoted is not vital in conveying the narrative. The absence of the word meaning does not reduce the audience's understanding of the storyline. Second, in the scene, a character demonstrates his ability to rap, so the rhyme is more important than the meaning. The rhyme is presented in the row of wordplay with a similar rhyme pattern. In the source text, all the wordplays end with the sound [in], and in the target text, all the wordplays end with the sound [ap]. A mild negative effect that may arise is the audience's confusion about the character's conversation, but the confusion is not significant in understanding the narrative.

Translating wordplay to wordplay-related rhetorical device

Translators also apply a translation strategy with target language wordplay. Two data were found showing the implementation of the strategy, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4
Wordplay translated into wordplay translation strategy

Source Text	Target Text
(f1) What you think, they're here to see Fat Joe? Audience: **Joe! Joe! Joe!**	(f2) *Kau tak dengar dia bilang* *Fat Jo*
(f3) No, man, they're saying, **"Go! Go! Go!"**	(f4) *Kau mau aku bilang **ayo, ayo!***

In table 4, sections f1 and f3, there are wordplays categorized as paronymy. The words 'Joe' and 'go' have almost similar spelling and pronunciation. The scene depicts a rap-singing battle with hundreds of enthusiastic spectators who said the star's name simultaneously. The star's name was 'Fat Joe'. They were waiting for his performance while collectively called the name 'Joe '.

On the other hand, a novice Fat Joe-challenger named George was encouraged by a friend not to lose out mentally. It is the scene when the wordplay appears. The audience's loud noise of calling 'Joe, Joe, Joe' was spoofed into 'go, go, go' by George's friend. 'Go! Go! Go!' is stranslated into *'ayo, ayo!'*. The translation strategy applied in this case is a translation with the target language wordplay because there is a maintenance of the rhythm of the source language in

the target language. At the same time the translator is able to transfer the semantic content of the source language while compressing the target text volume.

Translation Strategy Effectiveness Viewed from Multimodality Perspective.

The term effectiveness refers to the three criteria used to evaluate the translation results: clarity, accuracy, and naturalness (Larson, 1984). Several previous studies have discussed these three things but are still mostly oriented at the isosemiotic level. In the following presentation, a more comprehensive discussion is presented, by analyzing the involvement of all aspects of the multimodality of the movie for conveying the source text message.

The translation strategy using a common language in the target text is the strategy most often applied by translators of the movie. Eleven of the thirteen wordplays found in this movie are translated using the strategy. Table 5 contains the multimodality aspects of scenes containing wordplay translated using common languages in the target text.

Table 5
Elements of the movie multimodality in wordplay translation.

Abbreviations: NVC: Non-verbal Visual Channel (image on screen); VAC: Verbal Auditory Channel (the monolog, dialog); VVC: Verbal Visual Channel (written channel/subtitle); NAC: Non-verbal Auditory Channel (background music/ sound)	
Scene at 13.31 NVC: Cindy Campbell met George for the first time in a kindergarten classroom. Cindy was very excited to get to know George because she knew that George was Tom Logan's brother, the owner of the corn field, which he reported on the TV station where he worked.	Scene at 13.33 NVC: George, with the bravado of a rapper, also recognized Cindy. He was just a farmer. It is shown that George's character is innocent and tends to be stupid but wants to be seen as smart by those around him.
VAC : I know you, you're Tom Logan's brother.	VACs: And you're that reporter, Cindy Campbell.
VVC:*Aku tahu kau.* *Kau adiknya Tom Logan*	VVC: *Dan kau reporter itu.* *Cindy Campbell.*
NAC:-	NAC :-
Scene 13.37 NVC: Their conversation continues, and George is wrong to spell ' *crop cycles'* for ' *cop cycles'*. The camera focuses on Cindy, who still shows interest in George.	Scene 13.39 NVC: The same conversation is still going on. The camera focuses on George, who is not embarrassed when mispronouncing ' *crop cycles* ' with ' *cop cycles* '.
VACs: You did the story on our **cop cycles/ Crop cycles**	VACs: You did the story on our cop cycles/ crop cycles
VVC: *Yang mengerjakan cerita **siklus Polisi** itu./ Lingkaran panen*	VVC: *Yang mengerjakan cerita siklus Polisi itu./ Lingkaran panen*
NAC :-	NAC :-

Table 5 presents the data on the multimodal elements in the movie when the wordplay 'cop cycles' and 'crop cycles' appear. The translator translates the wordplay using the common Indonesian equivalent in the subtitle. Viewers tend to be unclear about the terms *'siklus polisi'* for 'cop cycles' and *'lingkaran panen'* for 'crop cycles' due to the absence of the two terms in

Indonesian. This kind of humour requires a sufficient comprehension of the source language message. The challenge to get the clarity of this translation is getting higher because the movie genre is a comedy that often uses illogical humour to provoke the audience's laughter. The audience's imagination and sense of humour are required to obtain the full message; from the point of view of the wordplay, the equivalent words cannot fully represent the source text. The translator cannot maintain the wordplay of the source text in the form of the wordplay of the target text. Then from the perspective of naturalness, the translation of the wordplay seems unnatural because the terms *'siklus polisi'* and *'lingkaran panen'* are not commonly found in Indonesian. This impropriety is very difficult to avoid because of the differences of linguistic systems and cultures of the source and target languages. The translator uses the literal meaning of the wordplay because of the absence of an appropriate equivalent in Indonesian.

From the above analysis, it can be concluded that there are two problems in the wordplay translation, namely the non-maintenance of the source language wordplay and the inappropriateness of the translation that appears. In this monosemiotic translation analysis, the strategy seems to be ineffective in translating process. However, in a polysemiotic movie translation, an extended analysis on multimodal elements has to be carried out. As the result, the strategy implemented by the translators turns to be effective. From the NVC point of view, the audience is exposed to the scene of two characters are having a conversation. One female character named Cindy was very impressed with the male character, George, who acted to be cool in front of Cindy. The scene also showed that George was wearing a set of rap singer's outfit including the headphone on his neck that hid his profession as a farmer. When being asked about his job, he did not even admit to being a farmer which he thought as having a lower social status than a rapper. From the VAC point of view, with his unique style, George made a mistake in pronouncing the word 'crop cycles' with 'cop cycles', which was later corrected by Cindy. George's mistakes and Cindy's corrections make it more comedic and both phrases can be classified as paronymy. The presence of this VAC aspect can reduce the impression that the translator forgets the rhythm of the wordplay and only translates literally.

The translation results in the *subtitle* of this scene would be unnatural if it were only viewed from monosemiotic perspective. It is due to different characteristics of movie translation from text translation (e.g. novel translation) because the translation results must be juxtaposed with the images and sounds of certain scenes. Partially, the equivalent in the subtitle is not entirely natural in Indonesian, but the image shown in the scene may help the translators to reach the naturalness. In this comedy movie, humour is given more emphasis than the semantic content to achieve the goal of a comedy movie in the narration.

This movie has fourteen wordplays that are classified into three groups. Paronymy is found six times, homonymy seven times, and homophones once. No homographs were found in the data. The wordplay is closely related to the culture and linguistic system of the source language, so the translator must choose the right strategy to translate it. The English linguistic system gives opportunities to create wordplay, which is usually in the form of paronymy, for example, the –ing form which can give the same rhythm of different verbs such as 'rapping, capping, tapping, flapping'. Likewise, changes in verb forms allow for similar pronunciation, such as 'slapped' and 'slept'. Such differences in cultural and linguistic systems are natural, considering that English and Indonesian are not cognate languages.

In a previous study, Dewi (2009) found three strategies applied by translators in translating the comedy movie Aquamarine: translating wordplay with target language wordplay, using common terms in the target language, and borrowing source wordplay for use in the target language. On the other hand, this research found more strategies applied by translators. One strategy not found in Aquamarine was the strategy of zero translation or not translating the source language wordplay. Undeniably, the implementation of certain strategies is related to the characteristics of the source text. There was one scene in Scary Movie 3 that depicted people singing raps whose verbal speed is very high and seems unnecessary for translation. After all, they are not significant in building the movie's overall narrative. The translator allows the audience to enjoy the scene shown, even though it does not convey verbal humour.

The most often applied strategy in Scary Movie 3 is the translation of wordplay using general terms in Indonesian. This finding is similar to the finding stated by Fithri (2019). There are advantage and disadvantage to implementing this strategy. The advantage is that it conveys the semantic content of the source text. The translator assumes that the audience's understanding

of the character's conversation will make them understand the narrative and, in the end, can fully enjoy the movie. In addition, applying this strategy is one of the main options for subtitle translation to accommodate spatio-temporal feasibility (Hatim and Mason, 1997). These considerations seem to lead the translators of Scary Movie *3* to put aside the rhythm of the wordplay. As the consequence, most of the wordplay of the source language is translated using the general equivalent in Indonesian. On the other hand, the disadvantage of the strategy is the loss of the funny elements of the source text. Unfortunately, the multimodal channels may assist the audience to get the funny part of the scene.

The second strategy is rather extreme, that is, zero translating. This strategy is only applied once in translating the movie's dialogue. The translator just left the source text untranslated for several reasons; first, the text contains insignificant meaning in supporting the movie's narrative. The translator assumes that the audience can enjoy the movie by listening to the rhyme of the song. Second, the character's rap song has a very high verbal speed, so it is impossible to write it in a subtitle. This kind of strategy is a strategy that is commonly applied in such conditions, which is termed resignation (Gottlieb, 1994 in Lomheim, 1999). The implementation of zero translating oppose a research finding stated by Tashpulatova (2020), in which a translation process should not distort ideological and artistic element of the original.

The third strategy is wordplay translation by borrowing the source language wordplay. This strategy is only applied once by the translator. With this strategy, the translator tries to maintain the wordplay rhyme of the source language without having trouble finding the right equivalent in the target language. By maintaining this rhythm, there is a foreignization process. The advantage of this strategy is the reduced distortion of wordplay contained in the source text. In addition the borrowing strategy implies the untranslability of the wordplay in the movie as proposed by Ivashkiv (2019). Viewers with English competency will be easy to catch the wordplay spoken by the characters and enjoy the rhythm in their source language context.

The fourth strategy is translation using the target language wordplay. This strategy is the ideal strategy applied for wordplay translation. However, its implementation requires more effort to find the appropriate equivalents. Of the fourteen wordplays found in the movie, only two wordplays were translated using this strategy. The limited opportunity to apply this strategy is due to the many differences in the linguistic and cultural systems of the two languages.

Lastly, the term effectiveness refers to implementing strategies as measured by three criteria in evaluating translation results: clearness, accuracy, and naturalness (Larson, 1984). However, these three evaluation angles are slightly different in evaluating the results of isosemiotic translations, such as book translations and the like. In audiovisual translation, the presence of images (NVC) and background music (NAC) affects the translator's decision to translate dialogue (VAC) to become *subtitles* (VVC). Multimodality is very essential in transmitting the message contained in a polysemiotic text (Pieper, 2021). In comedy movie translation, the multimodal elements may save the sense of humor in massive source text reduction for fulfilling the spatiotemporal aspects on the screen.

4. Novelty

This research explores the strategies of translating the wordplay of a comedy movie and the effectiveness of the strategy implementation by considering the existence of semiotic channels in the movie. The multimodal collaborative meaning transfer is essential in expanding the more complex analysis than monosemiotic traditional research, which only focuses on the verbal channel. This research presents an expanded analysis which considers polysemiotic analysis.

5. Conclusion

In this study, it was found that there were four strategies applied in the translation of wordplay, namely, translation using the generic equivalent of the target language, not translated, translation by borrowing the source language wordplay, and wordplay translation with wordplay. Each strategy has characteristics appropriate for translating a certain type of wordplay. It ranges from a mild strategy to an extreme one, exemplified by the zero translation strategy.

The effectiveness of the strategies is supported by the existence of some channels, namely the images (nonverbal visual channel (NVC)) and background sounds (nonverbal auditory channel (NAC)) in translating dialogue (verbal auditory channel (VAC)) into *subtitles* (verbal-visual channel (VVC))). Translators utilize the collaboration between these multimodal elements

to increase the translation strategies' effectiveness. The spatiotemporal requirement makes the translator reduce the target text's volume without losing the translation's quality. It is possible due to the existence of the four multimodal elements.

6. Acknowledgements

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